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Kenya: Prospects for Stability

Interagency Intelligence Memorandum

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FOREWORD

This Interagency Intelligence Memorandum assesses prospects for stability in Kenya over the next five years. It also addresses implications for the United States, including contingencies that could affect US interests.

The Memorandum was prepared under the auspices of the National Intelligence Officer for Africa, with the participation of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State. It was coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of the Army and the Air Force, with that of the Marine Corps, and with the Departments of the Treasury and Commerce.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

Traditionally pro-Western Kenya, one of two East African states that permit US access to their military facilities, is experiencing unprecedented political stress brought on largely by an economic decline. The country's mounting problems have aggravated tribal and communal tensions and highlighted other basic problems such as overpopulation, corruption, and the uninspiring and ineffective leadership of President Moi and his administration. A recent coup attempt by Air Force personnel has further weakened the government. The heretofore apolitical Army, which put down the uprising, now has a greater voice in government decisions.

Thus far Moi has made harsh threats in response to the revolt but, outside the Air Force, has not resorted to massive arrests of potential enemies. We believe, however, that he will turn increasingly to repression to maintain his hold on power, in part because of pressure from influential hardliners in the regime. He may buy time by intimidating his opponents, but he risks making new enemies and driving diverse groups to cooperate with one another and to consider extralegal tactics against the government.

Despite Moi's problems, we believe that he has about an even chance to serve out the remaining two years of his term. His prospects are helped by his ability to outmaneuver potential opponents and by the lack of a well-organized dissident movement. Divisions among his opponents—particularly the moderate leaders of the powerful Kikuyu tribe—will give Moi a fairly good chance to win reelection in 1984 if he can prevent a more dramatic economic decline or widespread political unrest. A coup or an assassination would be the most likely cause of his ouster before the election. Under these conditions, we believe the conservative senior military leadership probably would intervene to ensure the succession of a moderate regime.

Over the next five years, we believe, Kenya will encounter increasing instability and a weaker central government no matter who is president. Tensions over food, land, and other scarce resources are certain to intensify because the government cannot reduce significantly the country's annual population growth rate of 4 percent—one of the highest in the world. Economic woes, including a large current account deficit, and record levels of inflation and unemployment will continue

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to plague the country. Furthermore, Kenya's hope of substantial external aid may be damaged by foreign donors' dismay over its lack of financial discipline and increasing instability. International investors may hold back because of growing concern about instability in Kenya following the coup attempt, thereby damaging the country's foreign exchange position.

A budding radical movement may well pose a challenge to Moi or a moderate successor within the next five years. A coup by radicals in the Army similar to the uprisings in Liberia and Ghana is possible, although the opposition of the senior military leaders would continue to weigh against the chances of a radical takeover. Radicals are likely to need considerable time to organize a strong challenge to the present system. Moreover, the leadership and large portions of the general population will still benefit from Kenya's market-oriented system. On balance, therefore, we believe the moderate leadership has a good prospect of remaining in power at least through the period of this assessment.

In the event that Moi or another moderate politician continues to rule Kenya with the backing of conservative military leaders, US interests are likely to be affected in the following respects:

- Nairobi will remain suspicious of the Libyans and Soviets and keep them at arm's length. Kenya will maintain its generally pro-Western stance, but will continue to temper these sentiments to preserve its position as a nonaligned nation. As a result, it will adopt foreign policy positions that occasionally vary from those of the United States.
- Kenya will remain fearful that Somalia—which also permits US access to its facilities—retains irredentist designs on Somali-inhabited northeastern Kenya. Kenyan leaders are overly concerned that the provision of offensive arms to Somalia by the United States could again make the Mogadishu government a threat to Kenya's security. Such a development could prompt Nairobi to reconsider its military relationship with the United States.
- Kenya will continue to seek greater US aid throughout the period of this assessment. On the economic side, Kenyan officials will argue that Washington is not responding adequately to Nairobi's economic needs, and will ask for more assistance. The coup attempt has increased the urgency of Kenya's pleas for greater help. On the military side, the Kenyans will continue to seek assistance and cooperation, but they also will be sensitive

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to the likely negative domestic political costs of too close an identification with the United States, and this will introduce strains into the bilateral relationship.

- Moi's increasing loss of popular support may lead his opponents to intensify their attacks on the bilateral military relationship with the United States. A weakened Kenyan government may react by reducing the level of military cooperation, applying restrictive interpretations to the implementation of the access agreement, or—in the unlikely extreme case—canceling the accord altogether. Kenya also may seek to diversify further its sources of military equipment.

In the less likely event that radical leaders should gain power in Kenya, they probably would adopt a nonaligned policy and seek assistance from both East and West. A radical government almost certainly would move quickly to distance itself from the United States, particularly by canceling the military access agreement. Because there is strong anti-Communist sentiment in Kenya, however, the regime would be unlikely to become a Soviet client state.

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